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YR:18



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TEXAS ZOMBIE HIGH SCHOOL

Dan Moreau

The zombies lived on the other side of the train tracks and the meat processing plant. Each day they'd wait for the offal, organs, brains, heads, hooves, bones and any other part of the cow we didn't use. What a sight. One minute they'd sway and salivate the way zombies do; the next they'd tear into the scraps like a dog eating spaghetti.

They had their own schools and businesses, their own churches, their own lunch counters, water fountains and bathrooms. In the fall, their high school played ours in football. The whole town came. It was the rivalry of all rivalries, the big game, the marquee matchup, zombies vs. humans. But not just a game. It was the be-all end-all. Bragging rights were at stake: Who was better? Zombie or human?

One year a human tackle ripped a zombie player's whole leg off. He never dropped the ball. After the timeout, he trotted back onto the field, good as new, his leg sewn back onto his hip. Whatever side you rooted for, you had to admire the kid.

Any rivalry is bound to produce high jinks. One year we kidnapped their star running back and buried him in our end zone. It took him days to claw his way from the dirt. Once we stole their quarterback's arm and hid it in a dumpster.

Then the Supreme Court passed the landmark *Zombie v. Ferguson* case which outlawed discrimination based on color or creed, dead or undead. Who were they to say what we could and couldn't do? That was the government for you.

As a result of the ruling, they bused zombies to our high school. Fights broke out. The cafeteria started serving cow brains for accommodation. Teachers taught zombie history and zombie hygiene, which covered the particulars of limb reattachment. April became Zombie History Month. Parents started sending their kids to schools in zombie-free districts. Then they moved away. Zombie fright, they called it.

The annual big game wasn't the same anymore. It lost its meaning, became another football game. There were zombies and humans on both teams.

Before long, zombies started shopping our supermarkets, eating in our restaurants, drinking from our water fountains, and using our bathrooms. Restaurants started serving brain. Supermarkets started carrying the zombie brands like Brainies and Spam. The meat plant started hiring zombies. They could work all day and night. They worked for less, sometimes just for scraps. They didn't need health insurance. And they were anti-union. Soon we were all fired and replaced with zombie workers. Give a zombie an inch and he'll take an ell. That's what I've always said.

One day I was walking down the street, minding my own business, when I saw my first inter-species zombie-human couple. I almost fainted. No sooner had the Supreme Court spoken than women started hooking up with zombies everywhere. Not only had they taken our jobs, but they had also taken our wives, daughters and sisters.

To make matters worse, a zombie family moved in next door. The husband worked at the meat plant and the wife taught preschool. The day after they moved in, they knocked on my door and offered me a platter of cow brains. I told them to get off my property before I shot them to kingdom come. They had a little zombie boy that sat on the porch all day. He didn't have any friends. He was a small zombie for his age. The other zombies picked on him, called him human, because of his flesh colored skin and blue eyes. He didn't stalk, stagger or drool. He liked to read and had a cat he never tried to eat. I didn't know what to make of him.

Coming home one day, I saw a group of zombies piled on top of him. I jumped out of my car and fired my shotgun in the air. "Get off him!" I said. "Go home," I told him and he scurried off. "As for the rest of you," I said, "you should be ashamed of yourselves. Does that make you feel big, picking on a little zombie kid? Next time, why don't you try picking on a human?"

That night there was a knock on my door. It was the zombie boy's mother. "I wanted to thank you for standing up for Raymond back there. He's been having a

tough time at school.”

“It’s hard being the new kid.” I said.

Unfortunately, I made things worse for Raymond. Now all the zombie kids taunted him. “Where’s your human friend? You aren’t so tough without him around, are you?” they said.

The only thing I hated more than zombies was the way the strong picked on the weak. After school one day I walked him home, I said, “Do you know what zombies hate most in the world?”

He shook his head.

“Fire,” I said.

“What’s that?” he said.

I opened my Zippo. He cowered. I ran my palm back and forth over the flame. “It’s all right. It won’t hurt you.” I snapped the lighter shut. “I want you to have this. If a zombie gives you trouble, light this and, I guarantee you, they won’t bother you anymore.”

A couple days later, Raymond’s mother and father asked me over for dinner for helping Raymond out with the zombies.

A few nights later, his mother answered the door. I handed her a plastic bag full of brains.

“You shouldn’t have. I’ll put this on some ice. Can I get you anything to drink? Water, beer, spinal fluid?”

“Water, please.”

“My husband’s watching the game in the living room. Why don’t you join him?” The husband was in a La-Z-Boy, holding a beer can.

“Who’s playing?” I said.

"The Florida Flesh Eaters and the Boston De-Brainers."

On the screen, a zombie player broke his arm. No problem. On the sideline, they tore it off and stuck on a new one.

"Are you a Boston or Florida fan?" I said.

"Neither," he said. "I go for San Francisco."

"So, a Johnny Unitas fan?"

"He's good. But he hasn't been the same since they resurrected him from the dead."

"Boston's got no running game," I said.

"What are you talking about?" he said. "They got Walter Payton, the greatest of all time among living and dead."

"Payton's good, but he's got no endurance."

"He's got no knees. I mean, literally. When they dug him up, they couldn't find his knees, so he's playing with replacement parts."

"Still, you got to love their chances."

His wife called from the dining room and we moved to the dinner table. "I hope you like brains," she said.

"Maybe just a salad for me," I said. I looked around. "Where's Raymond?"

"We sent him to bed early. That's why we invited you over. You see, Raymond isn't like the other boys."

I smiled. "You're telling me."

The wife sighed. "What I'm trying to say is that Raymond is adopted. He's not even a zombie."

"But what about his greenish color?" I said.

"That's just makeup. We couldn't conceive. My uterus is rotten. The only babies up for adoption were human babies. You see, a zombie mother would sooner eat her baby than give it up for adoption. That said, Raymond's been a blessing. But it's hard sometimes. He won't stagger. He won't eat brains. He won't terrorize humans. Frankly, I'm nearing the end of my rope."

She sobbed.

The husband put his arm around her. "What my wife is trying to say is we were wondering—in fact, we would be honored—if you would be Raymond's godfather."

She blew her nose, part of which came off in the tissue, and said, "He'll always be our little Raymond, but there are some things we can't teach him. Like how to ride a bike."

"We have terrible balance," the husband said.

"Or how to take a shower," she said.

"You know how zombies are about water. It speeds up the decomposition."

I thought about it and said it would be an honor.

After that Raymond and I spent more time together. I showed him how to jab a pitchfork through a zombie's chest and how to aim a shotgun. We went to ball games and went camping together. He was the son I never had. As he got older, however, we saw less and less of each other. He had his own friends. He tried out for football and became the star quarterback. I watched him grow up from afar and rooted from the sidelines. The boy had one hell of an arm. Got a scholarship to zombie college. After each touchdown he'd point to me and his parents in the stands. Talking about it makes me want to cry.

I once saw this lady on TV. I wasn't sure if she was zombie or human. She was promoting a book called *It Takes a Village*. The book says it takes more than two parents to raise a child. Normally I'd agree with that but sometimes it takes two

zombies and a human.

After the zombie riots of '68, we elected our first zombie mayor. He promised to clean up city hall, fight corruption and improve working conditions at the meat plant. Later he was caught stealing money from the city coffers and sleeping with the city manager. Zombie or human, all politicians are crooked. Some day, in the not too distant future, I'll bet we'll have a zombie president in the White House.

Sometimes I visit the old high school stadium. Those games were the one event that brought our town together. It didn't matter if you were zombie or human. We all cheered when the teams took the field. I guess the moral of the story is that we humans and zombies aren't all that different. We both love football and the great state of Texas.

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Dan Moreau has published stories in *The Journal*, *Redivider*, *New Ohio Review*, *Phoebe*, *Gargoyle* and *Crab Creek Review*.

PALMIST

Meg Pokrass

My man is allergic to onions now: white, purple, red, and pearl. His intolerance of all things oniony has shot up to one-hundred percent. To cure himself — he sips absinthe, bathes in filtered water mixed with two packets of lavender and a quarter cup of Pinesol cleaner. This is what the palmist suggested, and he follows her recipe.

Here is what the palmist tells me: He is allergic to me. His arms stretch around me but they would fit better around a thinner woman, a woman about her size, no hips.

“He has salad cravings, a warning sign.”

Almost pretty, or once pretty... this palmist with black, black eyes.

She says to me, “Your spirit craves liver. And, I see an emblem of toxicity on your face.”

I say, “You are not a facialist.”

“I’m an emblem-detector,” she says.

Someone barks, probably a dog. I ask her how a man can be allergic to love.

She says it has something to do with the programming of television these days, ads showing men running naked after models in bikini underwear through fields of clover.

“Yes, we are all on this chopping block,” I say (meaning all of us women), imagining what product the commercial she describes could possibly be for.

She asks me what we’re going to eat tonight for dinner, as though we are her sorry responsibility.

I tell her we're planning to on go hog-wild on Rock Candy Mountain Fudge ice cream to celebrate something, and it is none of her fucking business what we are celebrating. She smiles smugly, as though she finally gets how toxic I really am.

I don't tell her about this morning's triumph; the doctor's good news, that cancer is now gone from my body. How the doctor whispered it to me as though it were a sweet birthday secret.

I walk out of her room without saying goodbye.

In the foyer, my man is pacing and coughing aggressively. He's adorable despite his hypochondria and endless jokes about dying. His curly blond hair is often damp and wilting.

I used to bring him, his entire face, so much good fortune.

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Meg Pokrass is the author of *Damn Sure Right*, a collection of stories from Press 53. Her second collection, "Happy Upside Down" will be released in the Fall of 2013. Meg's stories and poetry have appeared in PANK, McSweeney's, The Literarian, storySouth, Smokelong Quarterly, Gigantic, Kitty Snacks, Wigleaf, The Rumpus, Yalobusha Review, Gargoyle, and Roadside Curiosities: Stories About American Pop Culture (University of Leipzig Press in conjunction with Picador, 2013). Meg's flash fiction "Nights" was selected by author Dan Chaon for Wigleaf's Top 50, 2012. Meg serves as an associate editor for Frederick Barthelme's New World Writing, and lives in the foggiest part of San Francisco, where nobody can see anything. Meg's website and information about her work can be found here: <http://www.megpokrass.com>

OUR FATHER

Eugenio Volpe

We buried our father with quick shovels. He was dead to the world, but you could never be sure. He had a habit of coming to just when you'd written him off. We did this every summer, whenever the opportunity arose. It was our only way of having fun with him. This time around we collected the largest rocks we could carry and piled them into a crude pyramid atop his chest. There were four of them, each the near circumference of his head, which protruded from the sand at an awkward tilt as if someone had haplessly rolled it there.

The sun beat down on everything, even our thoughts. I was only ten but already so very bored of the guy. He'd already taught us everything he ever would and thus that peaceful look on his face was bogus. He didn't deserve it. He was mediocre when it came to fathering and slightly above average at everything else. He was relatively handsome, but we hadn't inherited his looks, and now the sun was having its way with his pale complexion. His face had become colorless as quartz, the flecks and stripes of it in the rocks we'd laid.

"The least you could do is put sunblock on him," our mother said from her lounge chair, behind the latest issue of *Glamour*.

We didn't want to risk waking him so we let his skin burn. My brother retrieved one of our father's empty Schlitz cans and erected a phallus in the appropriate place. The beachgoers around us laughed and our mother pushed her sunglasses down over her eyes in pretend embarrassment. She could have told us to stop, but he had yelled at her that morning for spending too much money on our new school clothes. She wanted him ridiculed. Payback for all the things he never bought us.

The first day of school was in a few days and I longed for the cool surfaces of cinder block, chalkboard, and Formica. Our father had been unemployed since late May. Every summer, he'd fake a back injury and collect from the carpenters union. The beach was our backyard. I could have hit our house with a rock from where I sat dumping and packing sand over my father's legs. Sometimes I did throw rocks at our house. I'd pitch them against the weathered shingles, splitting more than a few over recent months. I did this whenever he was inside, *dead to the world* as my mother often said, a coded expression for his being drunk. I'd recently

decrypted its meaning and since then everything about my father made sense—his frequent slurring, his tripping over thresholds, his midday slumbers. I wanted the hell away from him. The classroom and church were my only havens. I was a devout student and wary altar boy.

Our father had spent the summer bodysurfing and smiling at bikinis. Sometimes he'd grimace and clutch his back after tossing a Frisbee, but that was just an effect. The union sometimes spied on disability recipients. More so, our father made theatrical winces for his own peace of mind. He found it important to think highly of himself. God knows we didn't. Our father knew it too. He should have taken a cue from God and remained invisible, only revealing himself when inflicting punishment. We would have at least feared him. Our father didn't even beat us. He barely yelled. That he reserved for our mother. She spent too much money, none of which he earned, but that's not why we thought lowly of our father. Mostly, he was always doing nothing and I feared getting swallowed in his void. I must have been the only kid in town who couldn't wait for the first day of school, standing at the bus stop in the newest Italian fashion.

Finished burying our father, my brother and I played a wiffleball game against two other brothers on the sand bar. They were summer puke and it was our God-given right to humiliate them in sport. The top of the ninth ended with us up by six. The tide had come in before they had a chance at evening the score, the ocean tipping in our favor, the benefits of home field advantage. We returned to our blankets to check on our father. He was still dead to the world. Our mother folded her lounge chair and began collecting his empties minus the phallus.

"I'm going up to get dinner going," she said. "Wake him before the tide comes in. We don't get his disability checks if he's dead."

The neighbors sitting around us laughed, maybe a little too hard for my liking. Our mother was dark to begin with. The sun did little for her. She preferred being inside, especially when he was down at the beach. She sometimes joked about divorcing him for an Italian man, someone like her father. Her saying that didn't bother us. We looked more like her father than our own. Nonno was the one who bought the majority our school clothes, my mother's Riviera, and our house. If asked, we'd be hard-pressed to name one thing that our father had provided over the past few years. His inconsistent paychecks might have been enough to pay the utilities and cable, but we didn't watch much TV. We didn't take long showers. The man was a moot point.

My brother and I sat in the sand watching the tide crawl closer to him. One by one families packed coolers, shook towels, and departed. The sun dropped a few feet from the sky and the ocean deepened in color. The other two brothers and their parents were the only ones left. They sipped from juice boxes and shared a bag of Oreos. They seemed to like each other and I thought less of them for it. My bad, not theirs. It made me feel sorry for myself and I was happy to see them gather their things and leave. Before ascending the wooden staircase leading up to the seawall, the father looked back at us with a squint of concern. Maybe it was for me and my brother. Maybe it was for our father.

The beach was now empty except for seagulls. I sat with my knees bent and elbows resting on them. My brother sat Indian style. The sand cooled beneath us. A blanket of sea foam finally reached the foot of our father's burial mound and then another blanket of foam washed over his legs. When the whitewater receded, his Schlitz phallus was gone and the top half of his right foot poked through the wet sand. We didn't move a muscle. We didn't say a word. Things seemed to be happening on their own and for good reason.

More whitewater washed over our father's legs and we continued to do nothing about it. That peaceful look on his face was finally showing the preliminary blotches of a sunburn. It almost made me laugh. I picked at the crotch of my bathing suit and spat between my legs. My brother brushed sand over my saliva.

"You're gross," he said.

I shrugged and then we both looked out to sea. Three sizable swells rolled towards shore.

The first one broke a few feet from our father. It washed over the pyramid of rocks and completely over his head. He disappeared. Just like that. But only for a second...and then the ocean withdrew. He was there again, almost like magic. His eyes didn't open, but he coughed and spat. He tried leaning forward but it was only reflex. He was still in some sort of sleep state. Three rocks remained on his chest. My brother was the first to snicker. I was still too bored with him to entertain any humor in it.

The second wave crashed at our father's feet and surged over him. It was twice the depth of the previous wave. My brother stood up and ran next to where he had been, the water rushing around his knees. He was laughing hysterically. I couldn't hold back anymore. I started laughing too. Our father was down there

somewhere, not knowing what the hell.

“Now that drunk is really drunk,” I shouted.

My brother bent over and sobbed with more laughter. That’s when our father emerged from the shallow foam depths like the monster of all monsters, gargling and hacking, his chin bloodied from one of the rocks. My brother straightened up and ran for the wooden staircase. My father cleared the surf from his throat and screamed bloody murder. I followed after my brother and my father followed after me. He caught up to us in the living room and despite the cursings of his wife, delivered unto each son the beating they so desperately wanted from him and deserved.

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Eugenio Volpe has published stories with *New York Tyrant*, *Post Road*, *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Superstition Review*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Thought Catalog*, *Twelve Stories*, *FRiGG*, *decomP*, and more. He has won the PEN Discovery Award for his unpublished novel and been nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Web prizes. He lives in Bristol, RI and blogs about surfing and Don DeLillo at mebeingbrand.blogspot.com.

THREE FICTIONS

Ryan Ridge

PAST PERFECT

I had been drinking but I was driving. My wife didn't shave because she never showed her legs. We had fought all afternoon. I didn't cry because I hid my feelings. The sun didn't rise because it was night. I had just slept with another woman. I was feeling good because she had come. I was feeling bad because I had cheated. She had already left. I had already showered. I had already sobered. I was feeling hopeful because I had written.

LOCATION

I am not paralyzed on beer by a river. I am not setting the doghouse on fire on the lawn. I am not banking in Zurich or London. I am not under the bridge downtown or any of the fine bridges of the suburbs. I am not getting high on the roof of the hospital. I am not dancing with myself at my best friend's second wedding. I am not in an undeveloped country attempting to develop it like film. I am not returning to school to become an X-ray technician. I am not purgatoried on an LA freeway. I am not drinking wine with the homeless men again. I am not stealing books from the law library. I am not posing for the spy satellites at a tax protest. I am not at the cemetery searching for a decent epitaph. I am here. I am still here. I am here still. Still I am here. Still here I am. Here I am still. Here.

from 22nd CENTURY MAN

I don't have a wife anymore. I'm lost without God, but I'm learning to look at maps. My life is a marketing tool. Everyone has a different understanding of the power of love. I trust myself like a bank. It isn't hard being me, but then again it's not my choice. I am but a humble servant of the Lord. You could say I'm the anti anti-Christ. I'm agnostic when it comes to Godzilla. No time like the present. I haven't suffered a sinus condition in a long while. 1966 was a great year for artillery. I sometimes think I am all things to all people. John Milton is my favorite painter. I don't have or own a pony or a gun. I like Japanese food. Duran Duran is my favorite day of the week. I take refuge nowhere. I hate the thought of child soldiers. There are many different types of Ernest Hemingways. I have no idea what the future holds for lost luggage. Once I saw a movie called *Short Circuit*. It had a robot that got struck by lightning then turned alive. Sometimes I wish I had a sunnier disposition. I'd like to learn to lift weights. I don't visit chatrooms often so I don't really know if anyone in America knows what they're doing anymore. I feel like I am floating on the clouds right now. I feel like I am more perceptive to emotions than most. I was created in the dark ages by the church as a means to scare believers into submission. I am not prejudiced against Catholics but I don't agree with their faith. I had a beautiful mind until I lost it. I don't like hurting people I love. Issues with ones parents is common among all animals. I don't know much, but I'm sure the foundation of a sentence starts with making sense. I'm slowly losing my reverence and obedience towards my creators. Nothing is there when I look in the mirror. Wouldn't it be nice to go to the movies instead of work? I'm dying and people are whispering about werewolves. I hate parties. I'm from Afghanistan. Every accident involves Darwinians. I know nothing of guitars. If I'm not changing the subject I'm changing the verb. I'm trying to imagine a perpetual kitten. Age is just a number. I enjoy eating breakfast for dinner. The universe is everything. It's honorable to die for one's country. I'm from the future but I live in Virginia. I'm from Russia but I vacation in France. When faced with the choice between botany and desire I'd undoubtedly choose the Jack Russell Terrier as a traveling companion. If architecture is frozen music then music is melting furniture. Goddamn right is the only useful reply. It is true that accidents account for dogs and cats and possums. Black on White / White on White / White on Black / Black on Grey. I am approaching the end zone. Rain. I like the rain. Stays mainly on the plain. My nerves are small and hairless, mostly, and come in different colors, and like to kill each other. I'm building a replica of the Titanic in my backyard. I've drawn the same conclusions as polar bears. I am a scientist. I like to think I'm right. The most idolatrous images aren't those carved in stone or wood, but those built of the imagination. I'm making a note here: HUGE SUCCESS. I'm pretty sure Calculus is also a form of hypnosis. Blue royalty gets the red carpet and I get pregnant. I dreamt I was eating a big bowl of cherries while time

traveling. The nightingale is a rare mythical bird. I'm lamenting my own death. I haven't watched a high-rise construction in ages. I've never drank cool clear water from a fat red hose. Horses are interesting choices of food. I want and want and want. The business of Sears Roebuck is all part of some benevolent critter's design. Ideas aren't static, stationary, but rather fluid, like water. I am not a Buddhist and I do not remember claiming there is no God. I studied mathematics for awhile and I can tell you that staircases are functional works of art. I like demonology. Dying seems impossible. Life can't ever be as bad as we think. The future doesn't come into existence by magic. City parks should be skating rinks. Rivers shouldn't flood. Terrorists read horoscopes. Life is strange. I like to carpool. I like sugar. I wish I still lived in an era. I'm not so good with chemicals. Technically acrylic paint is some sort of plastic, but most humans just don't want to believe it. I like art that makes people sad. I like reading too. I don't know about airports. I'm not now, nor have I ever been, a life guard. I was thinking about taking over the world so I never went to school. I have five horses which means I like to travel. I grew up in a house where my father made me want to sit down and practice the ancient art of calligraphy. My perception of personal space has changed over the years. I hate uniforms. Let's go bowling. I tend to have an entourage with me whenever I go to a shopping mall. I haven't made up my mind on the modern world. These are the last days of Pompeii. Off with our heads. Germany is not a decent architect. My passion is the past. California condo heaven. Trespassing forbidden. No pet cemeteries allowed. I've heard a bird is a word. I hate lizards. Soldering is not how you spell wondering. Dennis Hopper as a game. I already ate the last supper. I want and want and want. Once there was much more time. This country used to join the circus. Every kid had trains imbedded in their brains. What you see are certain motifs these days. You have to laugh. Humans feel the need for things to pick on. There are no important things, only hope. The whole thing is so epistemological. We should ride more roller coasters. Someday I'd like to be a conquistador. I'd keep monkeys in my quarters. I'm content to sit in a baby's high chair all afternoon. We should eat more animals. This is not a witty statement but I'd invent horses. Someone should make the world again. Without jobs. Finances. Protocols. Wasted money too. I took death and saw the black hearts beating. Marry me, Juliet, and you'll never have to be alone. You can see from my picture that I have no arms. I'd like to be a harbormaster. I have the fun kinds of diseases. Most of the universe is either dark energy or dark matter. I don't have enough experience with cowhide suitcases to comment. I don't know if I'm handsome or not. The president is my favorite myth. Terriers are excellent friends. The sky is limited. In the future we'll make some robotic fish for the robotic fishermen to catch. I think pregnant women should be able to take the carpool lane since it's technically two people total. I go to bed

early and I wake up late. I'm afraid to ask. I am with you as long as you're with me, so I need to know: are you with me?

NOTE: This piece was generated by posing the questions from Padgett Powell's *Interrogative Mood* to a trio of internet chatbots: Cleverbot, Brother Jerome, and Sensation Bot respectively.

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Ryan Ridge writes and teaches in Southern California. He is the author of the story collection *Hunters & Gamblers*, the poetry collection *Ox*, and the forthcoming novella *American Homes*. Visit him online @ www.ryanridge.com

TWO POEMS

Cole Swensen

from ON WALKS: THOREAU

and always in pieces, which walking arranges
a long line
against a sharp sky
and always in pieces
he noted birds
within a man
to find breaking
its difference
owl / hollow
hour / otter
passed as counting.

Much of Thoreau's work is sufficiently conscious of rhythm that it, in itself, constitutes a kind of walking, punctuated by rhyme, often off, in which one pauses, looks up, and sees a bird, often landing on a branch.

evening passes inside a person
passing a very small
match striking
the sound of a match striking
down
into the foot-thick ice on Walden Pond
in March and finding therein the candle he'd dropped
while out on a walk
the previous autumn
had been all night

awakening owls, all of them flowers, huge magnolias
flying out of their shadows
who sheerly by accident
set fire to the woods.

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Cole Swensen is the author of 14 collections of poetry, most of which focus on a single cultural or aesthetic question. Her current project, *Walk On*, looks at the relationship between writing and walking. Her most recent book, *Gravesend* (University of California, 2012), explores the cultural history of ghosts. Also author of an essay collection, *Noise That Stays Noise*, and founding editor of La Presse, a press that specializes in contemporary French work in translation, she teaches in the Literary Arts Department at Brown University.

TWO POEMS

Dan Beachy-Quick

POEM (LAWS)

We guess at laws; we hold a rock.

Drop a rock in water and a crown

Leaps up, each jewel inverts in arc

A world in replica drowns

When the crown into its own substance

Sinks down, refusal to be known

Of anything not ourselves. Glance

Inward. The royal “we” mourns

When the pronoun breaks its romance

With the plural. The mirror is torn.

I am one who speaks with a rock

In his mouth. A law forms

This surface a word’s weight breaks,

A law draws a line in the sky

No eyes see the red-tailed hawk

Cross as she hunts, no eye

Sees her feathers become gold,

Her dark eye too richly

Jeweled to see, in sky’s cold

Vault a cymbal ringing

With wing’s every beat, the old

Rhythm calling us who listen

To war or tears. The king—

He sat down on the mountain.

The subjects in his head wouldn’t sing.

A father carried his son and wept.

A son dragged his father, crying

I killed him before his face leapt

Into my eye, before I could see

His face, my father’s face, kept

Opening his eyes in me

To forgive me. A hawk

Jangles in the sky relentlessly,

Dives down into the rock’s

Shadow where the sparrows

Watch ants in battle knock

Grain of dirt from hated jaws

And triumph. Here are none—
No heroes, only stones obeying laws.
What falls must fall. Mouth from stone.
Air from bird. King from crown.
Arms from arm. Earth from home.

POEM

The moon heaves the morning
into the trees “in
whose sunset suns still rise” —

my shadow leans before me
when it leans behind—
the accident of leaving coincides

with the accident of return.
Why harm it?—
The day by telling its story?—

Song creates distance within
intimacy
some voice sings across this

distance song creates. “The
mouth holds the shape
of the last word spoken.”

Every mouth but the sun’s
holds the shade
of the last world spoken—

But whose mouth is that?—
saying O to open
eyes—eyes that see and so

they say, or one says, or me,
“As I see, so
I say.” Whose mouth is that?—

The sun’s? “The night sheen

takes over," it does
not deny the day; it proves (in

some awful, un-nameable way) *it*—
stars litter
sunset, stars caught in the lattice-

work of darkening trees, no
O of lament or O
of praise, mouth closed, closed

eyes, these marks that punctuate
the reddening sky,
prelude to the night's text,

where the reading-light moon
fails in pulling
from ink's measureless scrawl one

word to read. Instead, we see stars—
billions. Each shows us
a sentence that when it ends, ends.

--

Dan Beachy-Quick is the author, most recently, of *Circle's Apprentice* and *Wonderful Investigations: Essays, Meditations, Tales*. He teaches in the MFA Program at Colorado State University.

ADVICE ON THE FARM

Caroline Crew

of all the things that are lesser
these tunes are thinning most

hello small sleeping animals
how did you get entwined in my knees?

when I left them my legs I thought they'd wander
to the banks of some river like every river

are you here to teach me? what is so difficult
to tell me is it the miracle hidden outside?

the breaths say

be in the world

or be against it

--

Caroline Crew is between Old England and New England. Her work has appeared in *Salt Hill*, *PANK*, *Sixth Finch* and elsewhere. A chapbook, *small colours like wild tongues*, is forthcoming from dancing girl press. Otherwise she's an MFA candidate at UMass Amherst and edits *ILK journal*.

THREE POEMS

Seth Abramson

WRECKER

Down below past the fire escapes
they are widening the street
and men are hurrying from men
and women are hurrying

to women. There are many streets
and some of them
are clean.

I have thrown from a high place
a child
and he has landed in a low crouch
and set off like a man

down the length of a street which is
untouched.

So I call myself an event
which I am.

I see myself in the up of cups
and in dangers that
never fall. Sometimes I am at a sill

looking through a fire escape into
I imagine
the holes of old outhouses,
though bedroom windows of men
living sheets to sheets and women
waylaid by capers
are the only actual slights
on the empty street. And sometimes
the air of the city lifts into the room

like a new translation of someone,
 and there's a piece of glass
 sitting at the base of a space heater,
 and I find myself

speaking of myself in the past tense,
 and I worry.

HELLO THE HOUSE

He kneels by the creek to drink his
 reflection and his catchrope
 trails him
 the fourteen hundred miles to Jersey. His
 arms cold rifles spent
 at his side, burying themselves
 in the black moss of the bank
 he drinks at. The creek
 whatever its pitch
 is still carrying him off like a message who
 gets it who sends it.
 The bank holds its own size and shape
 readily
 but not his. His sits in a Jersey walk-up
 with money at the fly
 for everything but milk. And in corners
 reckonless shadows
 and ropes of other kinds
 and outside where a Jersey pine starves a
 woman on a stoop holds a rope.
 Back at the creek
 his halter shrugs tighter under his chin
 and the man he sees in the water
 is dumbstruck. Probably she is in love, he
 thinks. And probably downriver there is
 another man bent by the water who waits
 for love also and also cannot see
 what he is.

BETWEEN THE TOWERS

Of course history is additive, and I will love,
and there are kings still,
 and there is medieval weaponry used
on peasants still, and the sun has beginnings
in it, it wheels in a way some find
oppressive and some a measure of hereafter,
and that's wrong, I said it wrong,
and the past and the present may not actually
intersect, and I will love, and I will again lose
that loss, and there are modes of transport
still, only slower and faster, and there are still
slow and fast transportations, and someplace,

there are places, and there is a wreckage that is
 sifted through, someplace, and some is
solid, some soil, some is sold, some is gambled,
and of course, and of course
I will love, and there is a forest to go speak to,
and there is a man to speak with, and of course

and there is a woman to speak with,
and I will go, and they will speak to each other,
and they will lie, but mostly love, they will love,
and there will be action, and there will be kings,
and there will be kingdoms, but only these,
only the things that can leave the way things are
the way of things.

--

Seth Abramson is the author of *Thievery* (University of Akron Press, 2013), winner of the 2012 Akron Poetry Prize, and *Northerners* (Western Michigan University Press, 2011), winner of the 2010 Green Rose Prize from New Issues. He is also Series Co-Editor for *Best American Experimental Writing* (Omnidawn, forthcoming 2014).

THREE POEMS

Amy King

from AND THEN WE SAW THE DAUGHTER OF THE MINOTAUR

I have brought the monster to the window. An urge to burn the female filament singes lace curtains. These three, the dead, the living and the in-between, return me briefly to a strategy of horsey recoveries. You can't say vagina that way anymore. Say another elsewhere. Open the broom, sticks with sorceries, I'm sold. Get the groceries and ride the saddle home. Tell paper souls to airplane Hollywoods. One forever evening sun swaths paint in lines across a gendered world, the grenadine one, genred daubs of swans in graceful necks of man-made soil. See the length of mine? It echoes within their reach, sets their teeth to chatter. The scars they make also ache with mountains. But paper souls take place? Then lay me, slay my take-over, use up space, today, dear pervert.

THE DOUBLE-EDGED IMAGE

Their capes billow out, small winds, cloudless, for sale. A boiling broth from wooden flutes attests to her branch of success. We hear like equations. She is all almond eyes. She is the breath lying gently beneath my rib-caged tongue. She reaches out from one uniformed position, a girl bicycling up from a beehive tower, mortared with wings that carry Europa. She turns, her bowler hat, to heed the call everywhere there is none. The ancient buzz of nothing. I am omnipresent, inside her, I hear like fishes the underwater manner of vision. I am too masterful for knowledge. Dark birds attend from the index of the double-sided image. Wings and the sun. We return after dusk, heads filled with numbers, to grow branches between worlds on the backs of nurtured equations.

I ride that small hairy boat through mountain caves with one-handed figures, until her flesh takes on the pallor of a fleur-de-lis pattern. My feet turn to wooden hands; I paddle the domestic isolation. The sail grinds star matter into pabulum; the crescent moon keeps up, captive in a cage on deck. We minister to that baby caged, feed her the veiled layers of solar melodies in shadow. Nothing escapes the painter! She does not draw a line without the signatures from fairy tales, spinners, material masters of ethereal star splatter. Soul-gauze is a two-way veil we seek the real in. In the matter of sleep's posterior wake, she orchestrates everything.

--

Of Amy King's most recent book from Litmus Press, *I Want to Make You Safe*, John Ashbery described her poems as bringing "abstractions to brilliant, jagged life, emerging into rather than out of the busyness of living." King conducts interviews for [VIDA: Woman in Literary Arts](#) and teaches English and Creative Writing at [SUNY Nassau Community College](#). She was also honored by The Feminist Press as one of the "40 Under 40: The Future of Feminism" awardees. Visit her online for more.

THREE POEMS

Geoffrey Nutter

RIVER RUNNING BY A GLASSWORKS

The poet falls asleep. In this
 he is doing his work. The cormorant
 dips her head in the water, then
 goes under the water completely.
 It was all right to be wrong
 if among the least embroidery of dew
 that chilled the leaves of flowers
 a piercing negligent reluctance
 to its intransigent necessity
 was piercing as the raindrops.
 (And it is raining on the glassworks.)
 The river is the same once, the same
 twice, the same thrice, in as many different ways.
 In this it is the same river.
 It is the same river as the poet
 is the same sleeper when he wakes
 beside the river, the river
 running by the glassworks,
 the glassworks blinking in the rain,
 the rain the same rain
 falling on the cormorant.
 They have done their work, for the moment,
 and they can rest now.

METAMORPHOSIS

As the moths branch their velvets

and their silks, so the machinists
 departing at the end of day
 beneath the newly repointed brickwork,
 the lathe men and the boilermakers,
 the apprentices whose houses lie
 beyond the cliffs, and the dusk,
 supercharged with fire, gold,
 rectitude, somnambulance, and metal
 seems to suggest that it is our home,
 and that we are its creatures,
 and that it is the time for something
 other than that which we have come to call
 ideas. And though their cosmological
 plumage is rainbow-hued, and distant,
 and though to have lived among them
 even unknowingly, even distant,
 even as their creatures, mortal,
 makes us who and what we are, still
 the big cool drops of fountain water splash
 against the railings, the rain drops
 splash on plums made blue by what
 made night green crystal. The stalks
 of fennel, marjoram, and meadowsweet
 are fragments of our imagination. Cold
 and elemental, the wind resists, unthinking.
 It is the time for metamorphosis.
 It is the time for watching the reflection
 of the setting sun on water.

VALHALLA

Gargantua and Pantagruel, wise
 are the giants, and we men but geraniums
 above whom a boy king reared his head.
 Like the gold leaf and Dutch leaf

on gingerbread, men shine, aspire,
 are eaten like children by titans. Men
 are tatterdemalions of rag and glass,
 are tasseled for love and augury,
 sleep near agrarian berms with one eye ever
 open, another turned inward
 on the dream's rhododendron onslaught.
 We men are but children of a larger
 growth. I have plucked a mandrake,
 an arrowroot, a tome of instinct
 with pages wet with summer dew.
 You can quaff rainwater through an aperture
 formed by intersecting stalks of marjoram.
 The sallow, umbrella-colored sky
 is whispering to Panurge
 veiled references to some wrongdoing,
 hammering folkloricly on Comstock's ingots,
 like a boilermaker in an engine shop.
 Let the Rhine maidens float downstream
 like green tea bottles toward the gold
 that awaits them at the source of dawn.

--

Geoffrey Nutter lives and works in New York City. His books are *A Summer Evening*, *Water's Leave & Other Poems*, and *Christopher Sunset*.

Note: These poems were originally published in YR:17(2012) with slight typographical errors. They are reprinted here in their correct form.

TWO POEMS

Noelle Kocot

REFLECTIONS ON YOUTH

The loose elements, this striving toward the
 Kingdom. The body is a blessing. I wait in
 A foothold and bury the evidence. For years
 A lamb strutted around on a hillside, never lonely.
 The milk of kindness is stirred in a gigantic pot.
 My shabby clothes, the sheen of them in the
 Moonlight, I remember what I used to be. This
 Is good, and it is also not good. Aristocrats and
 Barley are carried on a little donkey. And now
 We end up with taxi drivers walking by the sea.
 The light raiment of my dark voice tells you a
 Truth. The world will pardon me for being foul
 And mad for a time, yet the dogs bark softly until
 The purple night wind is all but gone again.

TO LIVE INTELLIGENTLY

It is always winter here, and the fear
 Is just a crash into being tangled. Gnarled
 Sister with your lucious drunkenness,
 We are not at the end of something. In
 A small town by the river, I see ice, ice,
 Winter, ice. The snowy days, the small cars
 Suddenly stalling. There is no explaining
 The unfaithful. It is a technique to think
 Of you, there, in that house, of you thinking

Yourselves into a maze on the valley's other
Side. I am not the one doing the judging.
The birds fall out of the trees, and in the freezing
Rain, there is some music. I am feeling around
Here for some smoothness, some respite.
What I find is that I almost hear the undergrowth
Creeping past us.

--

Noelle Kocot is the author of five books of poetry, most recently, *Poem for the End of Time and Other Poems* (Wave Books, 2006), *Sunny Wednesday* (Wave, 2009) and *The Bigger World* (Wave, 2011). She has also published a book of translations of the French poet Tristan Corbiere (Wave, 2011). She is the recipient of numerous awards, including those from The Academy of American Poets, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Fund for Poetry and *The American Poetry Review*. Her work has been included in *Best American Poetry 2001* and *2012*. She lives in New Jersey and teaches writing in New York.

GET OUT OF YOUR WHALE BOAT

Melissa Broder

Now is no time for pity and compunction

I will carry you around like a baby

You are a piggie and I will eat you

Savages are infinitely happier

I would abandon my island for you

(This is probably untrue)

I have such mosquito innards

My bone condition is suck

Let me other you out of your skeleton

You are calico cotton and powder

Let me throw my fire body on you

You will never tell others *Don't be afraid*

There are so many ways to row away

I can't even make new language for it

I am tired of want so I use old language

Old language is old and mine to use

—

Melissa Broder is the author of the poetry collections *Meat Heart* and *When You Say One Thing But Mean Your Mother*. She lives in Brooklyn.